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Laurel H. Miller

IMPERIAL FEDERATION LEAGUE

OF AUSTRALIA

Addresses, 1909

Annual Report for 1907-8.

No. 1—Some Observations on Imperial Problems,

...By...

E. MORRIS MILLER.

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Imperial Federation League

OF AUSTRALIA.

OBJECTS OF THE LEAGUE :

1. To maintain the Unity of the British Dominions.
2. To Strengthen it in the future by SOME FORM OF FEDERATION.

FUNDAMENTAL RESOLUTIONS :

1. That the chief objects of the League be to secure by Federation the permanent unity of the Empire.
2. That no scheme of Federation should interfere with the existing rights of Local Parliaments as regards local affairs.
3. That permanent Federation can be secured and maintained only by a system of common defence, devised and eventually controlled by representatives from all parts of the Empire.
4. That the details of any scheme affecting the common interests of the Empire can be properly considered only by conferences of representatives from all parts of the Empire ; therefore the establishment of such conferences should be a constant aim of this League.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION.

Each Member fixes the amount of his annual contribution for himself, and this may be forwarded to the Hon. Treasurer, "Hallatrow," Kew. The League is not responsible for the opinions of individual Members.

IMPERIAL FEDERATION LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA.

The Annual Meeting of the League was held at the Town Hall, on Monday, March 8th., the President (Hon. Alfred Deakin) presiding. The Hon. Treasurer (Lieut.-Colonel Brodribb), who acted as Minute Secretary during the absence of Mr. Morris Miller, submitted the Annual Report and Balance Sheet. The President moved their adoption, which was seconded by Mr. Stephen Mills. It was resolved that the present Executive hold office until September, when the annual election of officers would take place. Dr. Alex. Leeper, of Trinity College, was elected to the vacancy on the Executive, owing to the departure of Mr. E. O. G. Shann from the Commonwealth.

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1907-8.

In submitting the Annual Report for 1907-8, it should be mentioned that, although the arrangement was for the Executive Committee's term of office to cease on March 31st, it was decided during 1908 to make September 30th the closing date. The present report, therefore, deals with a period of 18 months (April, 1907, to September, 1908).

The League has always abstained from advocating any particular scheme for Imperial Union, and its main work has been to help towards the creation of an educated public opinion as regards all matters of Imperial interest. Members are allowed the utmost freedom regarding their convictions, but the League accepted no responsibility for these opinions. This feature opens the way for vigorous discussions, and it is hoped that funds may be available to publish them as well as the addresses.

The following papers were contributed during the year under review:—"In the Future by Some Form of Federation," by the Hon. Donald Mackinnon, M.L.A.; "The Principles of Alliance and Federation Contrasted," by E. Morris

Miller, M.A.; "The Legal Relations of the Several States of the Empire," by Professor Harrison Moore, M.A.; "Imperial Unity and How to Promote It," by Sir John Quick, M.P.; "The Naval Defence of Australia," by Lieut. Lionel H. Hordern, R.N.; "Imperial Federation and its Aspirations," by Rivers Langton, J.P.; "Our Empire in the Pacific," by Hon. C. Carty Salmon, M.P.; "Imperial Federation and Social Reform," by L. V. Biggs; and "School Power—an Imperial Necessity," by Frank Tate, M.A.

The Committee specially thanks Lieut. Hordern for his valuable contribution on Australia's naval defence, and it is hoped that the League will be honoured by similar addresses from prominent Imperialists in other parts of the Empire.

On October 18th, 1907, the Committee received, with regret, the resignation, through illness, of the late Hon. Secretary, Mr. H. D'Esterre Taylor, who was accorded a fitting acknowledgment of the valuable services he had rendered to the League during his long term of office. Mr. E. Morris Miller was elected to the vacancy. Mr. Miller was granted leave of absence in February in order to visit Europe, and Mr. A. F. Gibson and the Hon. Treasurer acted as Hon. Secretaries conjointly. The League is indebted to Mr. Gibson for much of the success it attained during the year.

Many subscriptions are still outstanding, and it is hoped that members will attend to this matter, in order that the League may carry on its important work.

The League's thanks are due to Mr. A. C. Macdonald, F.I.A.V., for auditing the accounts, and also Mr. C. C. Jones, the Collector, who generously rendered their services gratuitously.

T. BRODRIBB,

March 8th, 1909.

Hon. Treasurer.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON IMPERIAL PROBLEMS.

Before calling on Mr. Morris Miller for his address, Mr. Deakin made reference to the coming visit of Sir Charles Lucas, and congratulated the members of the League upon the acceptance by the Imperial Government of the principle that the officers of the Colonial Office should be afforded an opportunity of making some personal acquaintance with the large dominions overseas.

After referring to his personal experiences in Great Britain, Mr. Miller went on to say that his belief was that Australia's future lay within the Empire, but the part she was to play would become more important as the years advanced. Australia was now in immediate contact with the great foreign powers of the world. She could not lead an existence favourable to her own development apart from European complications; indeed, it was truer to state that the Commonwealth could only share in the larger life of nationhood in so far as her citizens boldly faced the complexities of the European situation and by their entrance into it do their share in the work of widening the sphere of its influence. If they failed to do this, they would inevitably become a race of political dwarfs; but having acquired the higher heritage of Empire, they should accept the ampler obligations of an Imperial people. That should appeal to the imagination of Australians. They had a gigantic territory to administer, though as yet they were few in numbers; but a larger life of that kind revealed to them that area was not of much account apart from the people in occupation. It was not an extensive tract of country that brought a nation into prominence: it was their human associations, the living voice of their leaders, and great thoughts and visions made actual by enduring deeds. In Australia, as in all new lands, people were apt to lay too much stress upon material development in itself to the exclusion of other considerations which, in the long run, occupied the abiding places in national history. Australians were constructing the material foundations and the framework of their nationhood—a most important task, and that work implied some meaning, some set design, some end in view, and what were those matters? And, further, in their contact with other nations, and especially with those enjoying the Imperial connection, those were the most important points to be grasped. Their partners in Empire were not so much interested in the actual and immediate rewards of a fine material basis, for those favours were not included amongst their direct national benefits, but the sister States were deeply concerned with the meanings of such policies for them, and their common destiny in the Imperial partnership. It was Australia's duty, as also that of the other States, to give

those features due prominence, to manifest clearly the Imperial trend of her present day policy, and thus show forth what was specially serviceable to the common needs of the whole Empire. As they saw the wide extending views of their larger mission, they would rightly focus the relative proportions of material prosperity in each individual State. In Great Britain that perspective was becoming better understood, and the establishment of the principle of preferential trade within the Empire would go a long way towards rendering it effective. Thus the constituent States would be enabled to recognise more openly that Imperial preference was a surer basis for determining, for example, the values of foreign commercial treaties than their own isolated material needs. The root-question in all cases was—Should Australia develop her resources for her own sake, or for the sake of taking a greater part in the larger life which a truly United Empire would give? In the midst of all such discussions, one need stood out above all others,—that of a constructive policy for the Empire as a whole. That was desired by the States, but the basis or standpoint on which such a policy might rest was not definitely grasped by them. Allegiance to the Empire as a whole, the "larger Body Politic," should be the supreme fact of union, and in the light of that principle real advance might be assured. At present, as Lord Milner affirmed, the aspiration for closer union was asserting itself strongly, and underlying that desire was the "conception of the Empire as an organic whole." Many in the United Kingdom stated that point of view in such a manner as to maintain that the Empire was "one block," with one centre, instead of a partnership of co-operating centres, while in the Dominions the want of a direct voice in the control of foreign affairs sometimes operated against its clear recognition. They found themselves in contact with the doings of foreign powers in their vicinity, and they were compelled to adopt some attitude regarding those matters. In other ways their political activities became coloured by their immediate associations. Those circumstances led them to emphasise their standing as separate States and to lose hold of the nobler conception of an Empire one and indissoluble, and of their part in it as representatives. This tendency was not so pronounced in Australia as in Canada. The United States had long exercised an influence upon Canadian affairs, and much of Canada's ideals were tempered by American relations. Mr. Castell Hopkins recently laid great stress on that fact in an address on "Continental Influences on Canadian Development," and gave warnings of the dangers likely to come from those quarters. Most of the intimacies referred to between Canada and the United States concerned themselves with commercial matters. In defence questions the national dignity of Canada and the British connection were not so much affected by American considerations. The complexity of the situation as regards the United States prevented her

from opening her ports to the American Fleet, even though the central governments of the two nations adopted a similar policy towards Eastern immigrants. In Australia the position was not so complicated, but the fears in Great Britain regarding Canada's nearness to the United States, and the effects of American pressure upon her internal policy, prompted, in some measure, the anxieties which were felt at the time of the visit of Admiral Sperry's squadron to Australian shores. To many it seemed as though Australia was losing faith in the British navy and was making sure of American friendliness towards her aims in the Pacific. The whole difficulty rested upon the point of view. If Australia was acting in her own separate interests, then the matter was a source of danger to Imperial unity; but if the Commonwealth's welcome was manifested on behalf of the Empire as a whole, as Mr. Deakin, indeed, maintained, then one had in actual working the representative principle which was a keystone of Imperial consolidation. It was gratifying that the present Liberal Government should have ended all doubts about the political consequences of the visit by making so generous and so broad-minded a reference to it in the King's Speech. Still the great fact remained: the growing States of Empire had no direct voice in foreign policy, while at the same time they were entering more and more into relations with foreign powers. Of course, a way was opening up in that direction, and Canada was taking a determined stand in the matter. Yet the danger in that state of things was that there was no definite Imperial foreign policy in the light of which the component nations of the Empire might frame their particular aptitudes towards other powers. English Imperialists who visited Canada all returned with grave concern regarding those relations, and it was hoped that the opening up of the consular services, the interchange of officials, and the widening of the field of choice for the Governors of Dependencies, so as to take in the Great Dominions as well as the United Kingdom, might prove aidful. Such duties would quickly beget those responsibilities in foreign relations which at present were not too clearly grasped by the younger States. The art of governing was a feature of national life that strongly appealed to the British race everywhere, and their love of it constituted a constant source of pitfalls in Imperial development. Those difficulties would become considerably lessened when Englishmen saw that Imperial policy must not be the mere extension of English political objectives, but that it must be the outcome of the consolidated opinion of all the States of the Empire. In that process they were confronted with the fact that the majority of the constituents were not only far from maturity as powers, but not sufficiently interested directly in one another's doings, and so long as they continued in that minor position, their authority in regard to foreign matters would make but slow development. It was here that the whole crux of the Imperial situation came to view, as Mr. Mac-

kinder affirmed. How could they, as a number of self-governing communities present a united front to other world powers and be treated by such as an individual whole? If that end were possible at all, it was plain that the evolution towards it under present conditions must be gradual. The more adequate and complete the protection, naval and military, the oversea States could afford themselves, the greater control they would inevitably exercise in external policy. But such movements could only be preparatory to an end: they would not be final in themselves. Their being was to secure a united foreign policy for the whole Empire. Unless that could be maintained, Imperial unity, in the highest and strongest form, was a mere fancy. On the assumption of an alliance of States with common political ideals, but with the right of separate and isolated dealings with foreign powers, there could be no continuity in foreign relations. To secure that continuity in external policy as regards the separate States as well as the whole Empire was the underlying difficulty of all Imperial problems. It was possible that trade connections might be left to the States in their individual capacity; and even defence on both land and sea might remain as a matter for mere co-operation on the part of the local authorities, the conjoint action being effected by conferences or similar means; and likewise with modes of communication, naturalisation, and so forth. But in foreign affairs a single principle must prevail throughout, if the Empire was to act with an undivided front. Such a position must also allow for the free play of the aptitudes of the co-operating partners, and in that instance a better acquaintance of one another's external needs was more and more required. Canada's growing power and her connections by treaties with the United States, combined with her increasing share in their determination, were leading her into a province of national life that Australians might well seriously consider, for if they were to agree on foreign policy, they must have regard to the effects of external influences, not upon one State merely, but also upon its connections with the other States. But no direct advance could be made apart from a serious-minded share in the responsibilities of the Empire's defence: on this warranty some forward step was possible, but its day was not yet.

Lord Milner's dictum of "doing things together" was the true beginning of the task of consolidation, and it stood as a sanction of the main result of the Imperial Conference of 1907. That assembly accepted the recognition of an equality of political status between the States of the Empire. Although that equality had not yet been made actual, so far as responsibility and Imperial policy went, still the mere fact of acceptance had gone far towards awakening an exceedingly keen interest in inter-imperial relationships, and the events of the last year proved that the self-governing Dominions were taking upon themselves the ampler duties

of their exalted status, and their endeavours in that direction were drawing them closer together, and thus some realisation of a community of interests was hoped for. Lord Milner earnestly emphasised in Canada the present need of "doing things together," so that a way might be paved for the easier working out of more complicated difficulties. The saving grace of co-operation in affairs of minor importance was that it prompted a spirit more likely to tolerate modifications of policy in matters of graver moment. Co-operation was in much favour at present. That was the direct result of the conferences of recent years. By such means the people were finding out from practice their common purposes. The process of discovery of mutual services was indeed a great undertaking and demanded the closest scrutiny and vigilance, but the chief difficulty was to carry out common aims after they had been revealed. It had grown customary to bring all sorts of theoretical considerations to bear upon those questions, that frequently the British people missed the real benefits which immediate agreements would have brought about, though no definite sanctions might be found for such procedure in political theory. Thus the acceptance of Imperial preference was retarded on grounds of mere abstractions, regardless of the power arising from a community of interests in trade, while Germany was very much alive as to the sinister effects of such a policy on her own commercial and imperial development. The military defence of the Empire was advancing on the wider basis of a united security, because in that connection the principle of equality of control had long been recognised, whereas the problem of naval defence was impeded by abstract predilections which did not necessarily enter into questions of policy, though it was also possible, as Lieut. Hordern maintained, for the oversea States to go beyond the limits which a due application of policy demanded. Having such circumstances in view, Mr. Richard Jebb advocated with much insistence that ministers should be capable of placing correct political hypotheses before their departments. That policy would assure less dependence upon mere abstractions, and a more enlightened grip of changing relations. New agreements must come forth as conditions changed: a lack of such would tend towards disintegration. The adoption of preferential trade within the Empire, even if it came about in the first instance, as seemed probable, by separate action on the part of the co-operating States, would nevertheless so emphasise the common trade interests of a world-scattered people that constitutional agreements would quickly follow in consequence thereof. The question whether the principle of Imperial preference should be established by the Prime Ministers of the Empire in conference, or by each government acting in isolation was a matter of expediency: the very complexity of the position, when once Great Britain had entered into the arrangement, would demand a further consideration of its development as an Imperial policy by the conference

itself. Even now that assembly had given, by a majority vote, its sanction to the proposal, and those agreeing had carried out their pledges; and further, the recognition that each State might work out the problem for itself was a strong guarantee against any form of coercion other than the stern pressure of the facts themselves. Mr. Jebb's contention that constitutional procedure was quite a matter of secondary importance alongside the question of preferential trade was not accepted by such thinkers as Messrs. Amery and Steel-Maitland, for the very reason that the development of the British race itself (and such others as became British citizens) was involved. And so it came about that some paid heed to the strength likely to accrue from commercial ties alone, while others were considering (from the same facts) how that strength might be best worked up into an abiding form. Those two aspects should not be lost sight of, for they were both necessary to the end in view,—closer union. If Mr. Jebbs' view became paramount, then the Imperial Conference would lessen in prestige; and should formal procedure become the dominating issue, the benefits of immediate commercial agreements would scarcely be realised. The more complete view, which was also recognised by all the thinkers mentioned, sought to secure Imperial preference not as an end in itself, but as a means towards the inauguration of a positive and constructive policy for the whole Empire. At present there was a likelihood of that hope being unfulfilled: the gravity of the Canadian position was not lost sight of by earnest-minded Imperialists, and it was not at all improbable that strong efforts would be put forth to rouse the Mother Country to the acceptance of the preferential principle, now that Germany and United States were seeking by their recent proposals to make it null and void. German manufacturers were in no way disguising their intentions, and it behoved the British people to take a firm stand to render their trade connections secure within the Empire. Germany did not need to use her armaments against them in order to lower their prestige, if that were indeed possible; her policy of thwarting Imperial preference was a sufficient instrument towards that cherished end. Once Canada was caught in the toils of those European entanglements, even though she received material benefits from the treaties themselves, the value of preference with the Mother Country would be irreparably depreciated, and the other States as partners would also suffer in consequence. Immediate action was most necessary to prevent the damage that would arise from isolated compacts with foreign powers. The oversea States had set forth their trade policy in clear terms, and their patience, though sorely tried, would yet vindicate their faith in a United Empire.

Imperial Federation League

OF AUSTRALIA.

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OF AUSTRALIA.

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